



POSITION STATEMENT ÉNONCÉ

Nurses Association of New Brunswick • L'Association des infirmières et infirmiers du Nouveau-Brunswick

DELEGATING NURSING TASKS AND PROCEDURES

The Nurses Association of New Brunswick (NANB) is committed to promoting the provision of high quality nursing care to the people of New Brunswick, at a level appropriate to each individual's needs.

In response to social, economic, and technological change, the scope of nursing practice is evolving and expanding. Some traditional functions of other professions have become part of nursing, or are delegated to nurses as identified in the NANB document *Decision-Making in Clinical Nursing Practice* (2000). Similarly, some components of nursing practice may either be delegated or incorporated within the scopes of other practitioners.

The dynamic nature of nursing requires nurses to be highly skilled in making judgements about what can safely be delegated to others involved in client care. In addition, the client has the right to participate in decision-making related to the choice of care provider. However, nurses are ultimately responsible for the quality of nursing services provided to the client.

Nurses use a systematic approach, called the nursing process, to make client care decisions. Nurses are responsible for assessing client's nursing care needs through collaboration with the client and other health care personnel, for formulating a plan of quality of care to determine effectiveness. The nurse may implement the plan of care by providing direct nursing care for selected clients and also, through case management concepts, by delegating appropriate activities to other categories of health care workers (regulated and unregulated), family and friends with appropriate reporting relationships established.

When nurses perform nursing tasks, they are expected to have the judgment and knowledge to determine whether or not to perform the task, when and how to do it and if the task needs to be modified in any way. Individuals who are not nurses are not expected to determine the need for nursing care, nor can the responsibility for the performance of nursing practice be delegated to them. They can,

however, be delegated certain nursing tasks and procedures. Nurses are responsible and accountable for the decision to delegate a nursing task or procedure. The collaboration between the nurse and the other categories of health care workers is, therefore, *intradisciplinary*.

Although nurses are responsible to clients for ensuring safe nursing care, health care facilities are also responsible for authorizing nurses to delegate to other health care workers. Because of agency liability, nursing tasks or procedures cannot be delegated to other health care workers

without the authorization of the employer. Nor can other health care workers assume responsibility for nursing tasks or procedures without authorization from nurses and the agency.

Appropriate delegation of the tasks or procedures associated with nursing practice to other categories of health care workers or to family members and friends requires that, in the judgment of the nurse, certain conditions are met:

1. The safety and well-being of clients are not jeopardized. Consideration must be given to the stability of client condition, predictability of client responses, and competence and desire of clients to direct their own care. Therefore, the delegation of tasks or procedures to other categories of health care workers is client-specific, that is, the health care worker cannot perform the task or procedure on another client without it first being delegated by a nurse.
2. Agency policies and protocols are in place to support nurses delegating nursing tasks and procedures.
3. The health care worker (regulated and unregulated), family member or friend has sufficient direction, education, supervision and support to perform the tasks or procedures properly.
4. The responsibility and accountability of all those involved in providing care, including evaluation of the decision to delegate, is made clear and agreed to by those involved.
5. When delegating a task or procedure, the nurse must also determine the level of supervision required. The level of supervision is dependent upon: the client population; predictability of outcomes of care; availability of resources for support/consultation as required; level of education, competence and skills of the health care worker, nature and complexity of the nursing task, risks involved in carrying out the procedure, client's condition; and the presence or absence of some factors will permit the decrease or increase of the supervision required.

It is NANB's mission to support professional nursing practice and to protect the public interest. Each nurse in New Brunswick is responsible for providing quality nursing care in conjunction with client demand. This may require the nurse to delegate some tasks and procedures to other health care workers, family and friends providing conditions, as outlined in this position statement, are met.

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Glossary

Nurse – The *Nurses Act* (1984) defines “nurse” as a person who has met the qualifications for registration as a nurse pursuant to the *Act*, the bylaws and the rules of the Association and is entitled to engage in the practice of nursing in New Brunswick. Nursing is defined in the *Act* as “the practice of nursing and includes the nursing assessment and treatment of human responses to actual or potential health problems and the nursing supervision thereof.” Nursing practice is not just a list of tasks – it is a process.

Delegate – Refers to assigning or committing a specific task or procedure from a person who is authorized to perform the task/procedure to a person(s) who is not authorized to perform the task/procedure within conditions listed in this position statement (College of Nurses of Ontario, 1995).

Health Care Worker – Health care personnel who may or may not be regulated.

- 1) **Regulated** – Health care workers regulated by legislation that defines, describes and controls their practice (Canadian Nurses Association, 1995). For example, the licensed practice nurse is defined in the *Licensed Practice Nurses Act* (2002) as a “graduate of an approved school of practical nurses, who, being neither a registered nurse nor a person in training to be a registered nurse, undertakes the care of patients under the direction of a registered nurse or a duly qualified medical practitioner, for custodial, convalescent, sub-acutely ill and chronically-ill patients, and who assists registered nurses in the care of acutely-ill patients, rendering the services for which he or she has been trained”.
- 2) **Unregulated** – Unregulated health care workers employed as personal care workers, nurses aides, health care aides, and other similar titles. It does not refer to other regulated nursing groups such as licensed practical nurses or certified nursing aides (Canadian Nurses Association, 1995). Educational programs for unregulated groups are not subject to enforcement of any standards. “Graduates” of such programs are not subject to registration pursuant to the successful completion of an examination.

Supervision – The monitoring and directing with authority, the work, proceedings or progress of a person providing care to clients.

References

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